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ART AND CITIZENSHIP

BY IAN B. STOUGHTON HOLBORN

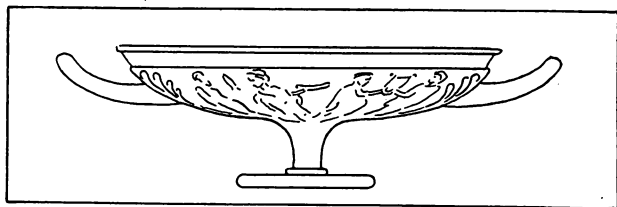
PART IV—BEAUTY AS THE PURSUIT OF THE HIGHER

THUS far we have seen that the generality of mankind does not aim at the highest, mainly because men do not realize what is the highest. Their seeming knowledge is not true knowledge: they do not realize: there is no compelling conviction. Our task therefore is to translate what is not generally understood into terms that are understood—to show what is the relation between this higher that is not known and the lower that is known. Even if this be not altogether possible, we may be able to show that there is a higher, which is at least ultimately translatable and which we needs must seek.

We ask—for what should men live? What is the higher, what is the lower? May we not rest content with some form of happiness? Why should the higher be sought in beauty—in design? Have we not here only another of the arbitrary goals preached by infatuated prophets—or is there actually something in the nature of things as such?

Now to explain the nature of a work of art or indeed to explain how anything is what it is, means at least the understanding of those four elements which Aristotle called the causes of its being. These are—the material cause, the efficient cause, the formal cause and the final cause. The material cause is that out of which the thing is made—the given. The efficient cause is the agency of its making. The final cause [Latin *finis*, an end] is the end or aim of the thing—that for which it exists. The formal cause is the form or design that the material takes so as to embody that end.

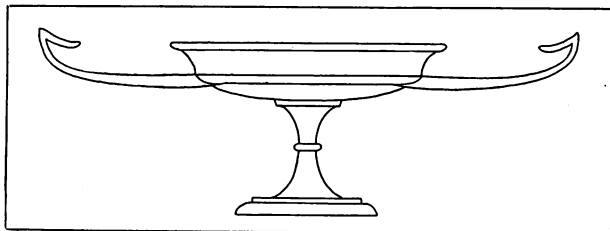
Before considering any of the difficulties, let us take an example. Here is a spade. The material cause is iron and wood—that out of which it was made—that which was given. The efficient cause is the maker and his tools and processes. The final cause is man's desire to dig, or more simply digging. The formal cause is the shape that the material takes, so as to embody the digging quality: it is the design that makes so much mere iron and wood into a spade. It is what makes a spade a spade.



Like all abstractions, these distinctions seem at first to be simple and clear, but afterward they become elusive and even hazy. It must be so. An abstraction is something abstracted from a whole and that cannot really exist apart from that whole. It is only the mind that abstracts it and the mind can never completely abstract anything. Nothing can be thought of as existing entirely without relation to anything else. An outside, for example,

except as related to an inside is not really thinkable. Even in the most concrete instances the same is true. In this Greek vase, it is not easy, particularly apart from the surface decoration, to say where the bowl ends and the stem begins, that is—to say exactly what is bowl and what is stem—although we distinguish the bowl from the stem.

Because of the mental necessity for abstraction, the artist endeavors in designing objects to separate elements in a manner that is rare in natural objects. But even then, a fillet, an astragal or a line itself can never be absolutely without thickness; and even in such a highly developed piece of differentiation as this bronze vase, there is still a possibility of variation in our division of it, in addition to the difficulty caused by the thickness and indefiniteness of even the sharpest junction or line; while in the first example the touching point of the reversed curves is mathematically determinable in a way that could not be done in the case of a hand and a wrist.



For this reason one mind will attempt to make the division here and another there, according as this or that connection is thought the more indissoluble. This is the difficulty of all thought and is not peculiar to our subject; it is fundamentally what we mean by knowledge. The universe of experience is a continuity, a *continuum*. The first process is to cut it up—to analyze; and the second is to grasp its relations and continuity again—to synthesize. There is always a danger of overemphasizing the abstractions, the differences; but if we do not resolve the *continuum*, the identity, we cannot think at all. It is well, therefore, that the thing itself be not confused with any of the four causes, as has sometimes been done, particularly with the final cause or end. If they were the same there would be but the three causes and the thing itself. The confusion arises from a certain ambiguity in the use of the word "end." We may in this instance say that the *end* is a spade that fulfils the *end* of digging; but the two *ends* are easily distinguishable.

Every example shows variation in the line of division and only by the consideration of numerous instances can the relationship of the four causes be fully understood. We may say that the material cause of a statue of liberty is marble, the efficient cause is the sculptor, his tools and the chiseling.

The final cause is the conception of liberty and the formal cause is the shape or design that the given marble assumes in order to express that conception. Here the distinction between the formal and final is more elusive and may be said to be analogous to that between the particular and the universal. The previous example of the spade may be brought into line with this one, if we regard the end—not as digging, but as a thing that can dig. But for reasons that will shortly develop, it is better to leave our analysis as it is.

One difficulty in making a clear abstraction is that the material elements have their own causes. The material cause is only the given, the marble has its own material cause in the rhombohedral crystals of which it is composed; and these in their turn have their material cause in the calcium, carbon and oxygen of which they in turn are composed. Similarly the efficient cause that makes the statue has nothing to do with the efficient causes that make the crystals or the marble, while the tools and agencies that make the statue are themselves the product of other tools or agencies.

Now the artist or poet [Greek *poietes*, creator or poet] is essentially a creator; he causes something to be that was not before; he produces being. He is generally considered merely a part of the efficient cause. But let it be suggested that he be considered a fifth and distinct cause; since he is not merely efficient for attaining the formal and final, but he it is who both conceives the end and carries it out. He is designer and executant. It may be noted that where no consciousness is apparent behind the efficient cause it is often difficult to discover the final cause, as in the case of a moraine caused by a glacier or an island caused by the sea.

Further difficulties arise from the fact that most of these causes may be deemed capable of being either within or without the thing itself.

Examples where the efficient cause is within the thing are what we call life. In the case of a mechanical device made by man, there is no life, because the efficient cause there present is not the cause of the thing itself. In such cases, curiously enough, what is hard to discern is rather the thing than the cause. Here are a spring and clockwork—clearly an efficient cause; the marking of the hour is equally clearly the final cause. The material is not the metal, any more than the calcium was the material cause of the statue. The material cause in this case is seen in such elements as the completed hands and figures. What is the thing itself? Not, surely, the clock? The efficient cause of that was the clockmaker and his tools; but the efficient cause here is the key and the works—and the clock-winder, if we consider the agent. In this case the danger is that of confusing the thing with the formal cause as before with the final.

An example of the final cause within the thing is one of individuality or *autarkeia* (self-sufficiency) which is the primary essential of design—of beauty. A design, or that which is beautiful, is essentially that which is complete in itself and is valued for itself. This is the fundamental distinction between the beautiful and the useful. In the case of the useful the final cause, the end, is outside the thing. It is, as we say, useful *for* something. As I have emphasized elsewhere, the beauty, for example, of a flower, lies in the fact that it is of no use, but a

very wonderful world of relations within itself. Nor need it here be stressed that the flower does not exist for the sake of the seed, but the seed for the flower, or, if we prefer to say so, for the sake of the whole plant. Moreover, although beautiful individualities may themselves be parts in a wider beauty, that is not wherein their own beauty and individuality consists. The lack of the power to appreciate individuality, the value of a thing in itself for itself, is perhaps the distinguishing characteristic of our day. We cannot say, as Perikles did of the Athenians, that we do not put on sour looks when our neighbor's individuality thinks differently from our own. It is the incapacity for disinterested admiration that makes it difficult for us to understand the beautiful, that makes true admiration and worship almost impossible for us. Probably, if we go still deeper, the root of the difficulty is the inability to abstract, that is, to think. We do not get beyond the concrete and we cannot abstract anything apart from the self.

It is convenient not to call mere distinctness of form or end, individuality; and it might be well to confine the term, character, to such cases.

When the creator is within the thing, and it is as we say, self-created, we have a personality. Life as we understand it is not necessarily personal: for mere life, it is not necessary that there should be a conscious grasping or determination of its own final cause. Personality, even of men, may be of a very low order.

Last, if we are realists and hold that the universal has independent reality, then the thing can exist apart from, or without, the material; and the triangle of the geometer may be taken as an example. This short survey of familiar distinctions with such new suggestions as it has been possible to offer, clears the way for the main question in our enquiry—what is the higher and how is it to be explained in terms of its relations to the lower?

In looking again at the four original causes, it may be said that the material and the efficient together constitute what is commonly known as the means, and the formal and the final are that which the means bring about, namely the end, in the broadest sense of the word. The two former exist for the sake of the latter. It may then be said that provided the end is attained, the means themselves, as means, are of little moment. The piece of sculpture is essentially the same work of art, whether in gypsum or marble—that is the material cause. Or, as I remember an art-master remarking "I do not care how you do it, you can do it with your boot if you like, so long as you get the result." This was the efficient cause. In other words the end is higher than the means. This does not really imply that the means can in any way be neglected, but it does imply that we should understand means and end in their right relations.

However, it may be argued that the end itself may be a low one and that there are means for deliberately obtaining the lower, which might give a descending scale rather than an ascending scale. Doubtless this is true and the most important part of our enquiry is yet to come, when we ask what is the highest end. But even in such a case it

would be a poor kind of salvation, if such it could be called, that saved us from reaching the worse, because we thought that in reaching the means, we had already arrived there. However, putting aside for the moment these more difficult problems and others that arise with regard to them, we have already seen enough to begin to apply our principles to life; and, provided we have any conception at all of the right end, we may say that to substitute the means for the end—materialism or efficiency for design or the goal—is the worst of errors, the greatest of disasters.

Yet is this not exactly the danger of the present hour? Men are failing to see any end and are obsessed by the material and the efficient; in a word, they are lacking in vision, in *theoria*, the clear view ahead. We have misconceived the practical and the theoretical. Few phrases are more characteristic of our day than "Oh, he is a mere theorist, he is not practical." But what do these Greek words mean? for the Greek, who presumably understood his own words, used them in exactly the opposite way, while giving the same slightly scornful intonation "Oh, he is merely practical, he is no theorist."

Now *praktikos* means fit for doing or acting, *theoretikos* means for clear viewing, for understanding. This is almost exactly the antithesis that we are considering; and what we need is to grasp the vision, the end in view and the fundamental principles of things.

The practical man then, is the man who can do and the practical thing is the thing that can be done. The theoretical man is the man who can understand and see the end. Of course what we really need is to be both practical and theoretical; but, as antithetically used, the words mean one as opposed to the other and not both.

Now what is the man who acts without understanding, without a vision of the end? He is the fool, as the Greek knew very well. Indeed that is all that is meant by the fool. The fool is not someone of absolute inertia, who does nothing at all; he is the man who acts stupidly without any vision or understanding of the end. He is the kind of man who, when he should make a mortise and tenon makes two mortises, or the woman who makes two excellent right-hand sleeves instead of a right and a left. He is a man who makes a key that will not fit the lock, or anything that, however carefully made in itself, will not fit into life and progress. The artist, on the other hand, is essentially the man with a vision. Antithetically, may we not define him as the one who builds castles in the air? That however is the way that all real castles begin. There is no other way. The man who never has a vision must be content always to live in a shack. We must have a vision or we shall remain where we are and never have anything at all.

Again, the practical thing is the thing that can be done; but the most fatal of all procedures is to be guided by the merely practical. That is to put the cart before the horse. We want not merely what can be done, but what should be. If we cannot do it, then we must set our wits to work and find out, even if we die in the attempt. To be limited to what can be done is practical, but it is the end of all progress. The whole glory of our destiny is to seek, not what can be done, but what cannot be done.

But the tendency of the practical man in this direction is to do what can be done at the moment. He neither looks at the end, nor does he grasp the value of the thing he is doing as an end in itself, a problem that we shall discuss later. He is either, in the first place, like the man lost in a London fog, who said to the cabman "Drive on, for goodness sake, drive on somewhere"—a very typical case of the modern mind that forgets that there is an infinite number of wrong directions but only one right one, and whose only thought is to "do something" to "get busy." There are actually many people who think that "doing something," when the end is not understood, is better than doing nothing. They are the people who have landed the cab of human progress in the ditch. Or, in the second place, he is a dealer in makeshifts; because he sees such a little way ahead, or fails, as we have said, to make the thing done also an end in itself and is blind to the fact that he might have had a castle when he only has a shack, an Athens or a Venice, when he only has a Manchester or a San Francisco. He lives, so he says. Exactly so, but does he live well?

The consequence is—to borrow a beautiful American phrase—what he does has always to be "scrapped." But the whole aim of the artist is to make a thing of beauty that is a joy for ever, a thing in itself. To set about making a thing that has to be "scrapped" is about the most stupid thing that one can conceive. Nobody but a practical man or a lunatic would, if he could possibly avoid it, make a thing that had to be "scrapped." This may be a rather extreme way of putting it, but that is the spirit in the air. We make a thing that will serve its time; it is practical, but we do not expect that what we build will last. Try and imagine whether we should act in the same way that we do, if, when we were putting up an advertisement hoarding or a workshop, or even many of our modern dwellings and business premises, each were to say to himself "this has to last for ever; for all time this corrugated-iron shed, this shack, this blatant advertisement will confront mankind; as long as the world endures men shall suffer for what I have done." But we all have to live in this world; we are born, we live and die, and, temporary as these things may be, we in our lifetimes never get away from them. The world for us, all that we can ever see or know of the world, is spoiled by these practical people. As far as we are concerned, it might just as well be for ever. We shall never see anything else. Oh, the colossal selfishness of the practical man, the fool! We know no else than that man lives on this world but once; and it is the spirit of the artist, who would make a thing that might last for ever and yet always be a delight, that must be the spirit of any man who would call himself a citizen at all!

The whole spirit is bad and it leads to worse. The shacks, the factories, the tenements, the advertisement hoardings have made our cities horrible and our children have to be brought up in these surroundings—and at last perhaps we begin to think a little. It is providential for mankind that children exist, or veritably we should soon have no souls at all. So the practical man suddenly wakes up to the horror of what he has done. Never mind, he says,

I will build a railway so that we may get out of the city. And some do, but most do not. Even for those who do, how typically practical! Many of them even live, as they call it, outside; and every morning they spend an hour in a stinking, ill-ventilated, germ-laden car, foul with each others' breath, hanging on to a strap; and then they proceed to do the same thing in the evening—a quarter of their working lives. The theorists pointed out seventy years ago that it would be better to build a city fit to live in than to build ways to get out of it. But the practical man had to be doing, he had to be busy—that is to say, he had to be a fool, he could not stop to think! He was too busy to think, that is, too much of a fool—we must never forget that they mean the same thing—and so the bulk of our cities as they were built by these practical people during the past fifty years have had to be, or are being, "scrapped."

But the worst of it is that we like this type of man; he is very dear to our hearts. "It is so easy to act, so difficult to think" as the French say. Save us from the terrible labor of thinking, we cry, from the time that we go to school onwards; O, anything but that!

The author was visiting an American city and met the librarian of the public library. The city water-supply had become polluted and there was great danger from typhoid. After a time the practical men were made to see that they must forget their moneymaking and party politics and face the problem. One of the councilors (let us call him) came into the library and the librarian seized the opportunity to tell him that the library had recently acquired some of the best and most up-to-date books, dealing with the purification of water-supply, and suggested that it was a fortunate circumstance which should prove opportunely useful. "O, we have no time for that sort of thing," said the practical man, "we have got to settle this matter first." Luckily the others were not so practical; yet the sad thing is that the case is typical.

They elected him again!

We are lacking in breadth of outlook, we are busied with the material, with the mere means, rather than the end and we do the thing that comes to hand. It is an age of efficiency, without asking the question—efficiency for what? Efficiency without insight is only practical and we may be efficient at what is better left undone. Suppose for instance that we were only efficient at making dollars—the material—it would be hard to sink lower than that. To confuse the efficient and final cause is ruin. We need both, but the gospel of efficiency for efficiency's sake is about the most deadly of soul-destroying doctrines that has ever been preached. What we need is in some way to make men realize the worthlessness of their aim, or lack of aim, not to make them feel that they must seek after these higher ends as a duty, but to quicken their spiritual insight, so that, having once seen how the nobler is nobler, they cannot help but follow it voluntarily as a delight. Once the inner spirit is changed the outer expression will follow of itself. The true citizen is no mere creature of circumstances and practical possibilities; he stands at the wheel and knows whither he is going; he sees indeed in a vision the city to which he will bring us, not practical, perhaps—not yet; but to attain the unattain-

able is just what we are here for. That is art. You and I may never see the city beautiful, but we may build our castle in the air, we may see it afar off.

There she rises in some spot beautiful by nature and made yet more beautiful by the hand of man, marked by sympathetic consideration for the charm and possibilities of the site, a thing which some of the old builders knew so well—some such place as Edinburgh or San Francisco might well become, did we but care about these things. The dominating buildings are not factories and hotels, things that are no ends in themselves but have come to be thought so in the fever of our modern blood. No, this nervous mechanical hustling to and fro of things that are largely worthless in themselves will in that day be a mania of the past; and a saner, steadier action of greater sweep and power like the movements of a facile swimmer compared with the hurried pantings and futile strokes of the beginner will carry us forward on a surer, swifter course.

In that dream city it will rather be great libraries and universities, temples of worship, civic halls and concert halls that will dominate the town; or perhaps museums, art-galleries and guildhalls, if such things be any longer required and do not savor too much of means. In any case it will be the higher that will dominate the lower, the spiritual that will dominate the material, the inner that will dominate the outer. A glance at our city will reveal that mind and spirit have come into their own and that the body and the material no longer determine the issue; and yet the body will never have been so lovely nor the material so refined. They will even gain by being put into their right place. What we need is to spiritualize the flesh, what we do is to carnalize the spirit. Beautiful *gymnasias* will repeat again the glories of Greece and the pure in heart will delight in the most exquisite and inspiring of all created things.

Here is some noble piazza or square surrounded by glorious buildings; there, another more secluded with quiet foliage and restful calm. Here is some gleam of water in the city's heart, there a glowing spread of color and the wealth of fragrant flowers. Thick groves of trees offer enticing mystery and sunny swards tempt us to drink the unpolluted air. Every street, every quadrangle has its own charm, its own character and individuality; so that the walking of the ways is a never-ending joy. Day after day, week after week, year after year will provide ever-varying fascinations, ever-unexpected turns and byways, vistas, surprise-views and magic sights. How boundless are the possibilities of straight and curved, of low and high, of architecture and vegetation, of earth and water, of picturesque and formal, of simple and ornate! Nor must we forget the charm and individuality of the houses where the citizens dwell, each revealing some new and beautiful expression of citizenship. In the intensity of the individuality of its parts, while perfect in their interrelations, will be the fulness, the height, of its end and being. And there will be no fashions in that city. Every sheep will no longer desire to do the same as every other sheep, but will be desirous of using his higher human faculties; but there will be no extravagances of extremes, because of the spirit of *harmonia*; yet the endless

forms of furnishings and of costume will be a kaleidoscopic wonder.

There will be no poor and no rich. Nevertheless there will be considerable range, lending color and contrast to life and some incentive even to economic energy, although no longer will that be one of the fields held in highest esteem. And children's laughter will resound through the city, not in the street, but in garden, pleasance, field and court, just where the children dwell; and the tragedy of the child, ill-fed, ill-clad and ill-trained shall be no more. Nor will there be any more beautiful sight in that city than to see the children come in happy dance



of graceful lines, singing sweet songs of loveliness and decked in brave attire, or even as of old when Sophokles, the loveliest boy in the fair city of the violet crown, led the choral dance, naked and unashamed, while he made music on his ivory lyre. For childhood is the yet unsullied beauty of the race, the infinite possibility of what is all unknown, the inspiration of our highest longing and our own successor when the hands fail and the of something nobler than we ourselves outlook grows dim—the future's hope have been or done, and here and now the dearest of all visions for the heart's delight.

Ian B. Stoughton Holborn

(To be continued)

THE SONG OF THE WEST WIND

I have come from the regions afar, little maid,
I have come from the blue, sunny sky,
I have breathed on the uttermost star, little maid;
There are few that are wiser than I!

I have magical songs on my lips, little girl,
I have wings that can carry me high;
I have drunk where the Pleasure-Stream slips, little girl,
There are few are more joyous than I!

And the kingdoms of Earth are all mine, little maid,
And they call me, wherever I fly,
From the rulers in garments that shine, little maid;
There are few that are richer than I!

I breathe on the flowers and they grow, little girl,
I sing to young birds e'er they fly:
I can foster, or crush at a blow, little girl;
There are few that are stronger than I!

But your face and your heart are so fair, little maid,
And your eyes they dance blithely and true:
I have come from the Every-where, little maid,
Just to loiter—to linger—with you!

Marie Welch

